

**FAUQUIER COUNTY
TOURISM TASK FORCE**

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

August, 2001

Task Force Membership

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BACKGROUND

The Fauquier County Board of Supervisors approved the recommendation of the Fauquier County Economic Development Advisory Council to review and consider recommendations on the role and scope of tourism in Fauquier County. To achieve this review, the Board of Supervisors approved the creation of The Fauquier County Tourism Task Force on April 2, 2001 consisting of representatives of key organizations active in tourism in Fauquier County. The Task Force was granted ninety days to conduct a review of tourism functions in the County, and to provide a report, with recommendations, back to the Board of Supervisors. The Fauquier County Department of Economic Development was assigned as staff to the Task Force.

The Tourism Task Force was assigned three specific tasks. The tasks are: 1) To provide the status of tourism in Fauquier County; 2) To recommend a potential structure for tourism in Fauquier County; and 3) To recommend an approach to establish a tourism assessment for Fauquier County

The Board of Supervisors has recognized the importance of tourism as a means to maintain the culture and heritage of Fauquier County, and as a means for expanding the County's economic base by enhancing a relatively non-intrusive revenue source. The Board of Supervisors has further acknowledged tourism as one of the five areas designated in the approved Plan for Economic Development for targeted business.

The following report, prepared by the Fauquier County Tourism Task Force, is submitted to the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors for their consideration with action where appropriate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report prepared by the Fauquier County Tourism Task Force presents findings and recommendations to establish an enhanced tourism program as requested by the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors. The report is designed to support the Board of Supervisors' Plan for Economic Development.

The key recommendations are:

Task #1

To provide the status of tourism in Fauquier County

Recommendation - If tourism is to reach its full potential as a valuable sector within the local economy a central point for planning and coordination of tourism in Fauquier County should be established.

Task #2

To recommend a potential structure for tourism in Fauquier County

Recommendation - To establish a Fauquier County Tourism Advisory Council and a Fauquier County Department of Tourism dedicated to promoting and coordinating tourism in Fauquier County.

Task #3

To recommend an approach to establish a tourism assessment for Fauquier County

Recommendation - A baseline countywide tourism assessment should be conducted by the Tourism Department/ Tourism Advisory Council, supplemented by an outside marketing review at a later date, if deemed necessary.

TASK # 1

To provide the status of tourism in Fauquier County

RECOMMENDATION

If tourism is to reach its full potential as a valuable sector within the local economy a central point for planning and coordination of tourism in Fauquier County should be established.

FINDINGS

- Tourism is an important area of the local economy that has been identified as a target area of emphasis by the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors and the Fauquier County Economic Development Advisory Council within the Fauquier County Plan for Economic Development.
- No public or private organization currently exists in Fauquier County that represents all interested parties on behalf of tourism.
- There is no central contact person that represents or acts on behalf of tourism in Fauquier County.
- The existing elements of tourism are generally isolated entities or activities with insufficient cross-marketing, interaction, or coordination.
- Most tourism elements within Fauquier County effectively coordinate their own area of responsibility, but do not have the time, funds, staffing, or authority to represent the County's overall tourism interests.
- Available data, as a measurement tool, is not being maximized.
- Opportunities to receive grants are not being fully realized.
- New tourism opportunities are being overlooked and/or not given adequate attention.
- Due to the large number of organizations, individuals, and activities involved, as well as the importance of tourism to the overall plan for economic development in Fauquier County, the demand for further and on-going evaluations of tourism is needed.

TASK # 2

To recommend a potential structure for tourism in Fauquier County

RECOMMENDATION

To establish a Fauquier County Tourism Advisory Council and a Fauquier County Department of Tourism dedicated to promoting and coordinating tourism in Fauquier County.

FINDINGS

- A Tourism Advisory Council should be appointed by the Board of Supervisors with input from, and consisting of, representatives from relevant public and private tourism interest within Fauquier County.
- A new department of Tourism and Director, dedicated to promoting and coordinating tourism is needed in Fauquier County government.
- An adequate budget is required to operate the new Fauquier County Department of Tourism, to include partnering, where appropriate with the private sector.
- Always mindful of increasing tax revenues through tourism, the Tourism Department should be charged with the responsibility of promoting and coordinating tourism with an emphasis on the County's diverse assets including heritage, agricultural, scenic, and recreational tourism, as well as destination and event activities.
- The new Fauquier County Department of Tourism should be modeled after the Fauquier County Agricultural Development Office and co-located with the Department of Economic Development.
- Emphasis should be placed on maintaining County funding support for existing and future Fauquier County Visitor Centers, as well as other tourism entities.

TASK # 3

To recommend an approach to establish a tourism assessment for Fauquier County

RECOMMENDATION

A baseline countywide tourism assessment should be conducted by the Tourism Department/ Tourism Advisory Council, supplemented by an outside marketing review at a later date, if deemed necessary.

FINDINGS

- The Tourism Task Force recognizes the financial constraints that a new department and assessments would place on the County, as well as the opportunities for increased revenue.
- The establishment of a central tourism office is the essential step to the development of an effective tourism program.
- An initial internal assessment will be crucial to a new department developing a thorough understanding of the tourism potential for such a program in the County.
- Substantial data and information is available to help in an initial assessment of the tourism potential of Fauquier County.
- Once an initial review of tourism in Fauquier County has been made, and a budget established, a more in-depth assessment by a professional outside source may be considered, which will give a more objective assessment of the tourism program for the County.
- Appropriate measurement tools must be established to assess the effectiveness of the program.

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